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The Background of the Kosovo War

Resistance to Psychology in Holocaust Scholarship

The Need to Punish

The Genocidal Impulse

Participation in Mass Atrocities

Power and Survival

ARNO GRUEN

The Need to Punish: The Political Consequences of Identifying with the Aggressor

Presented as The Distinguished Psychoanalytic Lecture at IPA, Fordham University, June 2, 1999.

The insanity of normality becomes apparent when we realize what contemporary normality consists of: murder, rape, hatred for all that is foreign, and the oppression of women and children under the guise of concern for their welfare. Once we understand this, a justifiable question concerning our humanity arises: Are those who act in a cruel and ruthless manner human in our sense of the word—human beings who love their neighbor, empathize with the pain as well as the joy of others, love what is vital and alive?

Or can it be, as Harvey Cleckley wrote in 1941, that there are people who appear to belong to humanity but use this appearance as a mask of emotional normality behind which, motivated by hatred and destructiveness, they parody all that is human? In other words, they represent a falsification of what we believe being human means.

How are we to understand a German doctor, the Health Officer of a small city in Upper Silesia and a member of the SS, who personally killed twenty-six people who were mentally ill in 1945 when the Russians were only a few kilometers away? Euthanasia, he said, was a peaceful and orderly procedure, and you simply could not let civilians run around freely in a zone of military operations (Dicks, 1972).

How does it happen that people who are regarded as completely normal, irreproachable fathers turned into mass murderers in the Second World War, like the members of Hamburg's 101st Police Reserve Battalion, who participated in the Final Solution in Poland (Browning, 1996)?

How is one to explain the heartfelt letters of a member of an organization collecting *materiel*—in other words, emptying the ghettos in Poland—who expresses loving concern for his children and in the same sentence

refers to the "burdensome menace" of the starving and ragged Jewish children around him? How can someone appear "completely normal while killing people," as a former Polish inmate of a concentration camp put it (Gruen, 1987)?

The thoughts and feelings of such people seem to follow totally normal paths: after all, you can't let the mentally ill run around in a war zone! And yet their feelings are not intact. But since we have been conditioned to pay attention to the image of normal emotions, we often mistake what is really felt—hatred and destructiveness—for the appearance of the normal feelings we're presented with. This goes back to our need as children to believe that our parents meant well when they punished us. That was when we learned to accept the way things appeared—because our parents insisted on it—instead of the way they really were. It should therefore come as no surprise that we can't distinguish between the expression of true feelings and a mask that simulates them. That makes us defenseless, and so we fail to recognize that the copy of a normal, feeling person is so perfect that we can't perceive the inhuman and robot-like character behind it. And since we are all to a greater or lesser degree compelled to play correctly the role of good children (and later, good adults), the approbation we are given for our role-playing becomes a substitute for the acceptance of our truly experienced feelings.

We live in a world in which we are becoming increasingly dependent on one another and yet at the same time are turning more and more against one another. Why are people hostile to what connects them, to what they have in common—their humanity?

Milovan Djilas, Tito's comrade in the partisan war against the Nazis and later one of his most severe critics, describes in his autobiographical report, *Land Without Justice,* the cruelty of a male world in which humaneness is scorned as weakness. Once after the war a Montenegrin Yugoslav named Sekula met a Turkish Moslem on the road from Bijelo Polje to Mojkovac:

> They had never seen or heard of each other before. That particular road was always dangerous, thickly wooded, and perfect for ambushes. The Moslem was happy that he was in the company of a Montenegrin. Sekula, too, felt more secure being with a Turk, just in case Turkish guerrillas should be around. The Moslem was obviously a peace-loving family man. On the way they offered one another tobacco and chatted in friendly fashion. Traveling together through the wild, the men grew close to one another. Sekula later declared that he felt no hatred, no hatred whatever for this man. The fellow would

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have been just like anyone else, said Sekula, if he had not been a Turk. This inability to feel hatred made him feel guilty. And yet, as he said, Turks are people too . . . .

It was a summer day, and the heat was overpowering. However, because the whole region was covered by a thick forest and the road skirted a little stream, it was cool and pleasant. The two travelers sat, finally, to have a bite to eat and to rest in the fresh coolness by the brook. Sekula boasted to the Moslem of what a fine pistol he had, and showed it to him. The Moslem looked at it, praised the weapon, and asked Sekula if it was loaded. Sekula replied that it was—and at that moment it occurred to him that he could kill the Turk simply by moving a finger. Still, he had made no firm resolve to do this. He pointed the pistol at the Moslem, straight between his eyes, and said, "Yes, it is loaded, and I could kill you now." Blinking before the muzzle and laughing, the Moslem begged Sekula to turn the gun away, because it could go off. Sekula realized quite clearly, in a flash, that he must kill his fellow traveler. He simply would not be able to bear the shame and the pangs of conscience if he let this Turk go now. And he fired, as though by accident, between the smiling eyes of that man.

When Sekula told the story later, he claimed that at the moment when he jokingly aimed the pistol at the Moslem's forehead he had no intention of killing him. Djilas writes: "And then, his finger seemed to pull by itself. Something erupted inside, something with which he was born and which he was utterly incapable of holding back." That must have been the moment when Sekula felt so close to the Turk that he was overcome with shame. As absurd as it sounds, he did what he did not out of hatred but its opposite: he killed this "stranger" because he could *not* hate him. This made him feel ashamed and guilty because the friendliness and good will he sensed in himself turned into a feeling of weakness. It was this feeling he had to kill. When he killed "the Other," he killed humanity in himself.

Klaus Barbie, the Gestapo "butcher of Lyon" who tortured a French resistance fighter to death, said in an interview with Neal Ascherson (1983): "As I interrogated Jean Moulin, I felt that he was myself." In other words, what the butcher did to his victim he did in a certain sense to himself. My point is this: hatred of the foreigner always has something to do with self-hatred. If we want to understand why people torment and humiliate others, we must first deal with what we despise in ourselves, for the enemy we believe we see in the other person must originally exist inside *us*. We want to silence this part of us by destroying the stranger who, because he resembles us, reminds us of it. That is the only way we can distance ourselves from what has become foreign to us in ourselves. That is the only way we can maintain our self-esteem and feel as if we are holding our heads high.

A patient of mine, a fifty-year-old geologist, told me about his father, who had enlisted in Hitler's Wehrmacht. Not only was the father extremely authoritarian but he also beat his son for the tiniest deviations from prescribed behavior. He was also condescending and violent toward his wife. The mother, moreover, never came to her son's defense. Only once, when the boy was seven, did she intervene because she believed the father, in his rage, was going to beat the boy to death. The son, obedient and always prepared to be submissive, was plagued even as an adult by strong guilt feelings whenever he had negative thoughts about his father. He entered therapy because he could not get rid of the feeling that something was amiss in the world he lived in.

Early on he had made the decision never to have children. Every time he heard a child crying, he became very angry, interpreting the crying as an attempt to demand something from him. This made him so irate that he was afraid he might hurl the child against a wall. Of course he didn't want to let that happen. What we see here is a man who didn't want to do to others what had been done to him. Nevertheless, his identification with his father continued to affect him unconsciously, for the way he reacted to crying children was the way his father had reacted to him as an infant. His rage was the rage of his father, whose hatred he had totally internalized as his own. Thus, the man's own being, together with his father's condemnation of the son's pain, became something foreign to be punished outside the boundaries of his own self.

A student in a course on therapy I gave asked me during a lecture: "I wondered why I was having racist thoughts in my work with asylum-seekers. The day before yesterday I was talking with a group of young Albanians. When some of them said, 'I want a position as an apprentice,' I couldn't help thinking of them as arrogant foreigners. Now, thanks to your lecture, I suddenly remember something from my childhood: I was never allowed to say *'I want,'* but only 'I would like.' So I hated these young Albanians for something I had learned to hate in myself."

"The warrior," says Barbara Ehrenreich in *Blood Rites* (1997), "looks out at the enemy and sees men who are, in crucial respects, recognizably like himself." In his book *The Warrior's Honor* (1998), Michael Ignatieff records a conversation he had with a Serbian partisan in a farmhouse in Eastern Croatia:

> I venture the thought that I can't tell Serbs and Croats apart. "What makes you think you're so different?"

He looks scornful and takes a cigarette pack out of his khaki jacket. "See this? These are Serbian cigarettes. Over there," he says, gesturing out the window, "they smoke Croatian cigarettes."

"But they're both cigarettes, right?"

"Foreigners don't understand anything." He shrugs and resumes cleaning his Zastovo machine pistol.

But the question I've asked bothers him, so a couple of minutes later he tosses the weapon on the bunk between us and says, "Look, here's how it is. Those Croats, they think they're better than us. They want to be the gentlemen. Think they're fancy Europeans. I'll tell you something. We're all just Balkan shit."

First he tells me that Croats and Serbs have nothing in common. Everything about them is different, down to their cigarettes. A minute later, he tells me that the real problem with Croats is that they think they're "better than us." Finally, he decides: We're actually all the same.

Ignatieff quotes from Freud's 1917 essay, "The Taboo of Virginity:" "It is precisely the minor differences in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them." Why, Ignatieff asks, can brothers hate one another with greater passion than they hate strangers? Why do men and women always emphasize the differences between them? "Men share a common genetic inheritance with women, down to a chromosome or two, and yet it is difference rather than commonality that has always been salient, so much so that undeniably common features—such as mental capacity—have been construed as unequal, notwithstanding all evidence to the contrary."

The question behind all this is: Why is it specifically the little differences we find threatening? Why the paradox that we find others especially foreign when they resemble us? The closer the relationship between human groups, the more predictable their hostility toward one another. It is what they have in common that causes people to fight—not their differences.

Genocide, torture, the daily demeaning of children by their parents—all these examples of violence and hatred have one thing in common: the feeling of aversion towards the other, the stranger. The victimizers classify themselves as "human beings" but deny their victims this designation. "The other" is degraded to a nonhuman status. It's as if such people were cleansing themselves; by denigrating and torturing others they free themselves from any suspicion of uncleanliness. It is cleanliness that distinguishes humans from nonhumans and shifts a person's perception of others to an abstract level, for they are not seen as individual human beings but merely as members of a group. Their concrete feelings, attitudes, and behavior disappear from view; instead, their personalities are reduced to a single factor: membership in a group.

This process of abstraction makes it impossible for us to experience others in an empathic fashion. Empathy is a basic quality of all living creatures, protecting us from losing our humanity. It is the core of human nature and thus of our individuality; but when our individuality is scorned and must be split off as if it were not a part of us, empathy cannot develop freely. Our capacity to empathize with others withers away. The process by which one's individuality becomes something foreign prevents people from relating to one another in a humane way—with compassion, sympathy, and mutual understanding. Instead, an abstraction underlies our relationships.

The origins of this alienation are to be found in childhood. This could not be more clearly formulated than in Hitler's words addressed to the National Socialist Women's Organization in 1934: "Every child is a battle" (Chamberlain, 1997). He was expressing with alarming clarity what is still often regarded in Western cultures today as an unassailable truth: that a natural hostility exists between infant and parents. In the struggle to "socialize" their children, parents force them to submit to the parental will. Children must be prevented from following their own needs and desires. Conflict is inevitable and must be resolved for the good of the child by persistence on the part of the parents.

Sigrid Chamberlain's sharply critical description of the Third Reich's official theory of childrearing illustrates its pathological effects. Unfortunately, she is describing at the same time an ideology typical of all so-called great civilizations, although disguised—namely, that the relationship between children and parents is a power struggle in which the "immature" will of the child must not be allowed to prevail. What is concealed here, however, is that it is not a matter of "civilizing" but of guaranteeing domination by the parents. Socialization of this sort insures that the motivation to obey those with power becomes deeply rooted in the human psyche. This is accomplished, however, only by silencing the child's own needs, wishes, and feelings.

Even Freud was still a captive of this ideology. In spite of all his revolutionary ideas that made childhood central to our thinking, he held fast to the concept of the inevitable struggle between parents and children. He believed that all children were governed by universal drives and had no other goal than to heedlessly satisfy their desires. He assigned to culture the cardinal task of taming these drives before they could cause harm to

others. Of course the views of Hitler and Freud cannot be lumped together, yet both have one thing in common: the attitude that children, left to their own basic inclinations, represent a danger for society.

Chamberlain's book is an important contribution to the study of the Nazi leaders' attempts to perpetuate their hold on power. This phenomenon has not been recognized as extending into our own day. The Nazi Party distributed to young parents hundreds of thousands of copies of the book, *The German Mother and her First Child,* by the Nazi physician J. Haarer. After 1945 the book continued to be reprinted; even during "the transition to democracy" no reason was seen to withdraw it from the market. The book sets forth the ideological basis for a method of childrearing in which children's individuality is turned into something foreign to them. I would like to summarize briefly Haarer's essential points:

Babies and young children are basically insatiable. They can never get enough attention; they always want to be held, which is of course a burden for the parents. "Babies are predisposed by nature to scream angrily for long periods, either to pass the time or to get what they want. Babies and young children won't obey, don't want to do what grownups want them to do but instead test them, resist them, and tyrannize them. *By nature they are impure, unclean, messy, and soil everything they can get their hands on"* (italics mine; from Chamberlain).

The faults that parents most often accuse their children of are dirtiness, greediness, inconsistency, and destructive rage. Children are, even according to Freud, insatiable in their drives, always intent on following the pleasure principle. We should find it striking that these are the very same qualities attributed again and again to the hated foreigner—whether Jew, Gypsy, Chinese, Catholic, Croat, Serb, Chechen, Communist, etc.

The stranger is always the one whose dirtiness can *contaminate* us. Hitler saw in the Jews the foreign element that would contaminate "his" people. Similarly, he regarded combating syphilis as one of the most important national goals. As a result he thought that sterilization of those with congenital syphilis was absolutely necessary as a form of "merciless segregation of the incurably ill" (Hitler, 1942). In the same vein, in his imagination he saw brains, bodies, and whole peoples rotting and decomposing.

The inner enemy, identical with the stranger, is that part of the child which was forfeited because the mother or father or both disapproved of it, rejecting and punishing their child for standing up for his or her own true point of view. I say "true" because children's earliest perceptions are empathically experienced and therefore can only be true. Hitler must also have experienced this rejection of his own spontaneous feelings and therefore disowned that part of his inner self as foreign in order to preserve the bond with his parents.

Haarer gives us an idea of how parents impose their will: she describes the child as domineering, as a challenge presenting the mother with a difficult task that must be performed properly. "The child who cries and is recalcitrant must do what the mother deems necessary; if it continues to misbehave, it is given the cold shoulder, so to speak, confined in a room by itself, and ignored until it changes its behavior" (Chamberlain citing Haarer). All of this of course is done for the child's own good and is portrayed as an act of love.

A mother's battle against her children is a reflection of the father's will, which many mothers adopt as their own because they have surrendered to the male myth of strength and superiority. In this way the foreign element in the father is transmitted to his children. Children who hate their own nature can respect themselves only if they can direct their hatred outward. If they disown their individuality as something foreign, they are compelled to find enemies in order to preserve the personality structure thus created. The consequences are disastrous: not only are such people unable to recognize the causes of their own victimization; they also deny that they *are* victims. By making other people their victims, they are perpetuating the process. But they *must* deny their own victimization because otherwise the earlier experiences of the terror accompanying it would re-emerge. No child, including the threatened one within us, can stand up to this terror.

As children we were helpless and at the mercy of our parents. Our survival depended on our complying with them. The inner terror accompanying victimization is therefore profoundly existential. That is why fear of losing our job, our social position, or our role in society can shake the foundations of our being. If our self-esteem is based primarily on success, status, and material gain, then the potential loss of these external achievements must be experienced as existentially threatening because the old feeling of terror—at being helpless, at the mercy of others, and ashamed—is reawakened.

It is my belief that this is the real reason why xenophobia increases in times of economic and/or moral instability.

Erich Fromm pointed out that those who identify with authoritarian power cannot tolerate the growth of social freedom, and this too can lead to instability and chaos (Fromm, 1941). Thus, whole segments of a population can direct their energies to restoring authoritarian social structures. Lloyd deMause has suggested that the expansion of freedom and the liberalization of social constraints in Germany's Weimar Republic produced

a "growth panic." The growth of inner and outer freedom met with violence and killing, ultimately leading to Hitler's assumption of power (deMause, 1997).

Interestingly enough, de Tocqueville wrote in 1865 that—contrary to the belief at that time, which still holds to this day—the French Revolution of 1789 was not the result of economic hardship. On the contrary, the Old Regime had been experiencing economic growth for years. De Tocqueville says: "It is not always in going from bad to worse that one falls into revolution. It more often happens that a people who have borne without complaint, as if they did not feel them, the most burdensome laws, reject them violently once their weight is lightened. The regime that a revolution destroys is almost always better than the one that immediately preceded it."

Jonathan Schell describes the social revolution the United States has undergone over the past thirty years: the legalized oppression of black Americans came to an end with the civil rights movement; the sexual revolution broke the taboo against sex before marriage; the feminist revolution changed the nature of the marriage contract and opened to women the job market as well as public life in general; and now there is the gay liberation movement. "Each marks an expansion of human rights and human freedom into new realms of life; each breaks down mechanisms of social control that previously were not much challenged" (Schell, 1999). Schell notes that along with these transformations, the politics of recent decades has become increasingly dominated by conservatives—to the point, I might add, that there is even a degree of acceptance of the murder of physicians who provide abortions. Just as in Weimar Germany, but taking different forms, violence against these social innovations has surfaced.

If people base their identity on identifying with authority (Gruen, 1968), freedom causes anxiety. They must then conceal the victim in themselves by resorting to violence against others. Both economic hardship and affluence can activate the victimization factor. Then people's feeling of self-esteem is threatened, and their readiness to find enemies and victims grows.

People with this sort of self "recover" when a given authority promises to restore the social order. The American historian John Bushnell (1985) describes how in the years 1905 and 1906, the Russian army repeatedly mutinied as well as put down rebellions. The same soldiers behaved in radically different ways in rapid succession, and within ten months they went through two complete cycles of rebellion and renewed loyalty. Troops that put down rebellions from January to October 1905 mutinied from the end

of October to the beginning of December, and by the end of December they were already shooting at civilians again, only to rebel anew from May to June of 1906 and at the end of July to suppress uprisings again.

Bushnell shows that the soldiers' fluctuating behavior had nothing to do with the treatment they received or with their political views. All that mattered was how they perceived the regime's authority—that alone influenced the stability of their sense of self. If they believed the old regime was coming to an end, they mutinied, but if they believed it was still in control, they repressed civilians.

We see that it is not so much the disintegration of an external social structure that produces rebellion but whether there is still an authority to whom one can submit. If it seems to be missing, then a personality that has been based on identifying with that authority falls apart. And thus shifts of loyalty occur—in this case repeatedly. The readiness to commit violence in such personalities turns directly against what was formerly considered good.

To be sure, this behavior could also be interpreted as throwing off the chains of one's earlier adaptation to something bad (identifying with the aggressor), which one had considered good—the old regime. But a non-autonomous self does not revolt because it has undergone a fundamental transformation; it simply changes the target of its violence. Revolutions may or may not change the forms servitude takes, but they do not affect servitude itself as long as people continue to submit to authority. They will go on defending what is bad as good, and no true liberation of the self will take place.

Inner suffering and the need to escape the old feeling of terror can become so great that it takes ever more energy to ward them off. This can be done by seeking out and combating in foreign "others" one's own inner nature, which is the trigger of the terror. Naturally, we are most likely to find our own inner nature in those people who are similar to us. Now we can understand the horrible truth expressed in Klaus Barbie's words, "As I interrogated Jean Moulin, I felt that he was myself."

The emergence of the stranger and his externalization stands in direct relationship to the degree of impairment of that which is most personal—namely, a person's identity. But how can inner development take place in children if everything that makes up their individuality is rejected and made foreign? Then identity is reduced to adaptation to those external circumstances that insure a child's psychic survival. Children do everything to fulfill their parents' expectations, and the way they do this is to identify with their parents, but then the child's individuality is replaced by a foreign element.

An identity that develops in this manner is not oriented to its own needs but to the will of an authority. This of course has far-reaching implications for the individual as well as for society as a whole.

If identity is a fundamental constellation of immanent personality characteristics, then my observations indicate that many people do not possess this kind of identity. The Nazi mentality was obsessed with robbing people of their identity. The horror of the concentration camps was not associated solely with physical annihilation; a paramount goal of those who ran them was to destroy human dignity and the persona itself. These were people without a true identity of their own, who had to take from others what they themselves did not possess. Out of revenge they killed the stranger in themselves, who could have led them to a genuine identity of their own.

Paul Celan recognized the despair of those who were at the mercy of this particular sort of violence. "No one kneads us again out of earth and clay, no one speaks of our dust . . . We were a nothing . . . the no-one rose" (1965). People like him could not be demeaned nor could their inner substance be destroyed. Celan remained a "no-one rose" forever. And the French surrealist poet Robert Desnos wrote while in a concentration camp: "I lived proudly, though often hunted . . . among the masked slaves . . . and yet was free. . . . What, humans, have you done with these treasures? Don't be afraid, for I am dead . . . nothing threatening for you."

There can be no doubt that many people live without a firm inner identity. Years ago studies of sensory deprivation demonstrated that people isolated from their social and cultural context became psychotic (Lilli, 1956; Grunebaum, 1960; Heron, 1953). It was not recognized, however, that the outcome depended on the degree of a person's inner coherence. Admiral Byrd's autobiographical report of his months-long isolation in the polar region shows that an inner vitality makes one independent of external sensory stimulation (R. E. Byrd, 1938). The physician Evelyne Bone (1957) spent seven years in solitary confinement in a Hungarian prison. Her rich inner world of experience and thought kept her psyche intact. This possibility does not exist for someone whose inner life has turned into something foreign. That is surely the reason why so many subjects in the deprivation studies had psychotic breakdowns.

Those who have been able to develop an inner coherence and derive a feeling of identity from it do not, even under extreme conditions of frustration and deprivation, lose their self-confidence and their belief in themselves. The kind of identity, typical in our culture, that is based on identifying with fear-inspiring authorities is, on the other hand, constantly at

risk of dissolution. Such people can consolidate a self only by creating imaginary enemies or by conforming to the prevailing social structures around them. The latter case applies to Hitler's enthusiastic admirers who immediately adapted to the new democratic principles introduced by the victors after the collapse of the Third Reich.

There are numerous examples in this century of people who, in spite of having endured the horrifying conditions in extermination camps, preserved their identity. American soldiers who refused to participate in atrocities and the torture of prisoners during the Vietnam War illustrate the same phenomenon (Herman, 1994; Eng, 1988; Werner, 1989).

I want to emphasize that the "stranger" in us is bred by a culture that won't accept the spontaneous expression of children's aliveness and vitality. This aspect of a culture gives rise to violent behavior and is responsible for the development of deficient identities. Personalities formed by the processes producing the inner stranger were never able to develop trust as an underlying component of their personality. Instead, they take on a "false identity" that makes them idealize repressive authorities in the hope that they will be rescued by the very people who are their tormentors.

Under such circumstances there cannot be an interior life that is able to protect us from that "abstract nakedness" of being human which Hannah Arendt (1973) spoke of. This nakedness is exposed when a true identity is prevented from developing and its place is taken by a false identity based on outer achievement, an identity that falls apart when the social context makes such achievement impossible. On the other hand, survival in the death camps and in the Gulag was possible only for those with an identity based on inner processes. This is also the conclusion of Des Pres's (1976) study of survivors. If identity were based only on "external criteria," then we would have to admit that the Nazi philosophy was right.

Des Pres writes: "Without the past we have nothing to stand on, no context from which to organize the energies of moral vision." But this assumes that one has experienced a genuine past that an alienated self cannot produce. And Nadeszha Mandelstam (1970) says, "By his screams [a man] asserts his right to live, sends a message to the outside world demanding help and calling for resistance." Those who must deny their own pain can scream only over the pain supposedly caused by "foreigners." Here lies the explanation for the phenomenal success of Hitler, who succeeded in transforming his personal paranoia into an actual experience for the entire German nation. Millions adopted his pathological projections as their own because they could not acknowledge the victimization in their

personal lives. This dangerous potential still exists today, for the same psychological mechanism comes into play when politicians exploit for their own purposes people's deep-seated readiness to consider themselves victims. So long as they are unable to scream because of their own pain, they are susceptible to another Hitler. "Silence," according to Mandelstam, "is the real crime against humanity."

Primo Levi writes in *The Drowned and the Saved* (1988):

> The ocean of pain, past and present, surrounded us, and its level rose from year to year until it almost submerged us. It was useless to close one's eyes or turn one's back to it because it was all around, in every direction, all the way to the horizon. . . . the just among us, neither more nor less numerous than in any other human group, felt remorse, shame, and pain for the misdeeds that others and not they had committed, and in which they felt involved, because they sensed that what had happened around them and in their presence, and in them, was irrevocable. Never again could it be cleansed . . . .

As Jean Améry (1966), who was also tortured by the Gestapo, put it: "Someone who has been tortured remains tortured forever. . . . Someone who has undergone torture, can never again feel at home in the world. The shame over being so utterly reduced cannot be expunged. One's feeling of trust in the world, a trust that falls apart partially with the first blow and then fully during the torture, can never be restored."

Because the inner dignity of survivors was undramatic, it did not match our expectations of heroism or great achievement. The behavior of survivors is similar to that of the so-called mentally ill: both are characterized by a duality: outer submission and inner adherence to one's own vision. The South African writer J. M. Coetzee (1996) understood this very well when he described the duality of Osip Mandelstam's resistance to Stalin. The poet, whom Stalin let starve in a Soviet gulag, celebrated the dictator in a poem but only seemingly, for as Coetzee writes, "He fabricated the body of an ode without actually inhabiting it."

We must proceed from the assumption that all those who grow up in our culture have experienced a certain degree of alienation from their inner self. It can therefore happen to all of us that we sometimes disown our own true nature. This is a process that is often re-experienced in psychotherapy. A patient of mine had a mother whose behavior was unpredictable. On one occasion her mother chased her with a knife and threw it at her. During a session my patient described several similar experiences.

The next time I saw her she reported:

> When I left the last session, I was overcome with longing for my mother. At the same time I had a feeling of great emptiness. My shoulders became tense, and suddenly I cried out for Mama. I felt a dark energy; I felt myself withdrawing from life—both feelings were clearly connected with my mother. Yet I also had the feeling that nothing could happen to me as long as I'm with her. But after the session and crying 'Mama' I felt the darkness again, and that became like a safe haven for me.

Here we observe the re-experiencing of that moment in which terror is transformed into a feeling of security. It seems that when a child's fear becomes unbearable because of being helpless and at the mercy of another, the fear can turn into its opposite, a feeling of being safe. Adults can also undergo this shift under conditions of imprisonment and torture, as described by Jacob Timmerman (1982) in his account of being tortured during the dictatorship in Argentina, and by Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka (1972), who was imprisoned during the reign of Nigerian dictator General Gowan. A variation of this pattern is presented in a recent study by Spence (1996) of political prisoners in the Chinese gulag, who were convinced that it was not the fault of their oppressors that they were starving and dying—it was their own fault!

The stranger is the real victim within us. The self has been distorted through being obedient, which makes it almost impossible to recognize what is really happening. Obedience, one could say, serves to subordinate oneself to the oppressor but also to disguise his deeds. In other words, obedience reinforces power, making it impossible to direct one's bottled-up rage against those who are responsible for it. But the rage is there, as is the hatred for the victim in us, who must be rejected as foreign in order to accommodate those in power.

My work with patients over decades, as well as my understanding of historical developments (Gruen 1997), have led me to the conviction that all "high" cultures are built on power and violence and are driven by psychological mechanisms that determine human behavior. Underpinning *our* "high" culture are our efforts to control the world, to possess, to dominate, and simultaneously to create mechanisms that allow us to deny and disguise our real motives.

What fuels this process is the obedience imprinted by parental dictates—"I am punishing you for your own good." Attempts to counter this principle by means of progressive child-rearing theories must fail because

they do not recognize its innermost core of inner alienation beginning with birth (or earlier).

We are caught in this situation and bound by it. Patients in psychotherapy are searching, however blindly, for a way out. They became ill because they are struggling against the alienation of their psyche, even though they are not conscious of doing so. Their inner rebellion keeps them from adapting entirely, with the result that they are regarded as outsiders, soilers of their own nest, even betrayers of society's norms. They enter therapy because they are seeking support to avoid being classified as "ill." They want to feel like those who manage to act "correctly," to be "successful," "free of anxiety," "free of depression," "free of stress." This too is a sign of overall alienation.

I would like to turn my attention now to the well-adapted, who are classified as "not ill:" those who compete successfully, who dominate, possess, and conquer—in other words, those who appear to be free of anxiety, stress, and suffering. The attempt to divide people into categories of ill and not ill is doomed to failure because it does not take into account the real illness that being a victim produces. If this crucial aspect of our development is ignored, then our understanding of history must remain incomplete. Our desire to understand human history will be frustrated as long as we are not capable of recognizing the ubiquity of the stranger within, an inability that comes about because we are forced to deny the terror and pain we were once exposed to. This prevents us from recognizing our victimization and its source, with the result that obedience is perpetuated because it provides a false sense of security. If we disobey, then we are overwhelmed by feelings of guilt.

Every living being needs stimulation to exist. For the human psyche to survive, stimulation must also exist in interpersonal relationships. Isolation not only reduces consciousness of the outside world, it also can lead to madness. Klaus and Kennel (1970) demonstrate that the visual interplay between mother and newborn provides dynamic stimulation for the latter. If a child finds no response in this "dance of the eyes," it is just as fear-inspiring as a physical threat. Murder is therefore not only a physical act but a psychic one as well.

When children are exposed to this kind of inner terror, they must do everything possible to survive. This leads to what Ferenczi (1984) described in 1932 as the transformation of anxiety and terror into a feeling of security. This process originates in a social environment that allows adults to exploit children's dependence in order to advance their own feeling of self-worth, and leads children to quickly reject their own feelings and perceptions for the sake of preserving their vitally essential bond with the caregiving adult. A child does this by submitting totally to the adult's expectations. Ferenczi puts it as follows:

> Children feel physically and morally helpless; their personality is not sufficiently consolidated for them to be able to protest even in their thoughts. The adult's overwhelming power and authority makes them mute, often robbing them of their senses. Yet their fear, when it reaches a peak of intensity, automatically forces them to submit to the will of the aggressor, to intuit and obey his every wish, to forget themselves entirely, to identify totally with the aggressor.

Such identification not only causes victims to ally themselves with their victimizers but to idealize them as well. In the eyes of the victim the victimizer appears to be a source of security. At the same time, the victim begins to feel his or her pain as weakness because the victimizer forbids these feelings. If he were to become aware of his victim's pain, he would feel guilty. That is something the victimizer must avoid by inflicting further violence. Yet the pain and resulting rage persist in the victim, only this time the rage is turned against the self, which is now experienced as foreign. It is part of the normal process of adaptation to direct this rage against the external stranger. The ubiquity of this phenomenon determines the course of human history.

The study of history revolves around rulers, conquerors, and powerful military leaders. Most sociological and historical ways of thinking attribute the behavior of such figures to their greatness, far-sightedness, and superiority. I believe the opposite to be the case. Our history focuses on those who are considered to be well-adapted, that is to say, those who direct their rage and hatred away from their own selves and turn them against the stranger. In reality, great military leaders tried to escape their own pain by destroying it in their supposed enemies.

In *Depth Psychology and a New Ethic* (1969), Erich Neumann asks the question, "Have problems of ethics . . . any relevance at all in an age dominated by a dance of death, to which National Socialism in Germany was little more than a prelude?" His answer is yes, for "a historical consciousness which is able to survey the development of mankind as a whole is bound to recognise that the highest endeavour of the human species has always been devoted to the creation of the individual. . . . and it is only on the surface that a psychology which, at this time of all times, regards individuality as the central problem of community, appears to be fighting a losing battle. Again and again, these losing battles turn out to be the

growing-points at which decisive developments take place for mankind." Critics like to call this psychologizing. A disturbing motive is concealed behind this objection: to rob human beings of their responsibility for themselves so that they can avoid feeling guilty—that is, having a sense of responsibility.

Psychology must concern itself with the total organism, and that is the task of a psychology that serves the individual. Consequently, the central question we need to address is, Which part of our humanity have we lost? How and why did this happen, and what can we do to regain it? (see Diamond's discussion of history, 1979).

Our social and political problem of alienation, which leads to voluntary servitude, was described by Estienne de la Boëtie (1988) as early as 1550:

> My sole aim on this occasion is to discover how it can happen that a vast number of individuals, of towns, cities and nations can allow one man to tyrannize them, a man who has no power except the power they themselves give to him, who could do them no harm were they not willing to suffer harm, and who could never wrong them were they not more ready to endure it than to stand in his way. It is a grievous matter—and yet so commonplace that our sorrow is the greater and our surprise the less—to see a million men in abject servitude, their necks bound to the yoke, and in that state not because they have had to yield to some greater force but, it seems, because they have been mesmerized by the mere name of a single man, a man they ought neither to fear (for he is just one man) nor love (as he is inhuman and barbaric towards them).

We often find ourselves in a position of weakness, with no option but to yield to force.

Boëtie describes the politics of obedience, the political consequences of identifying with the aggressor—a process Ferenczi so clearly traced back to childhood:

> [Those surrounding] a tyrant ingratiate themselves with him and beg favours of him, and the tyrant, seeing this, requires them not just to do what he says but to think the way he wants them to and, often, to anticipate his desires. It is not enough that these people obey him, they must also please him in every way, they must endure hardship, torment themselves and drive themselves to the grave in carrying out his business; his pleasures must be their pleasures, his tastes must be theirs, they must distort and cast off their natural disposition, they must hang on his every word, his tone of voice, his gestures, his expression; their every faculty must be alert to catch his wishes and to discern his thoughts.

With this description of the political implications of identification with the aggressor, we not only return to the nature of the problem of inner alienation but also to the deep psychic wounds that human beings suffer in this process. But these wounds cannot be acknowledged because that would violate the command to be obedient, which the idealization of power demands in order to ensure its continuing existence. The result is what we characterize as normal behavior in our culture: the life-long attempt to gain control over the painful part of our nature—the part of us that we have lost and that keeps on making us feel impotent and helpless—by making victims of others in order to punish *them* for the victim in us that we are not allowed to be.

Translated by Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum. This article is based on *Der Fremde In Uns (The Stranger Within Us)* by Arno Gruen, published by Klett-Kotta, Stuttgart, 2000.

Prof. Dr. phil. Arno Gruen, Rütistrasse 4, Ch-8032 Zürich, Switzerland, is a psychoanalyst and psychotherapist.

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RICHARD MORROCK

The Genocidal Impulse: Why Nations Kill Other Nations

In her presentation to the 1998 convention of the IPA, Dr. Alice Miller posed the question of why Germany, with its long history of anti-Semitism, did not instigate a Holocaust during World War One, when much of Eastern Europe was under its control. What follows is my attempt to answer that question in terms of the one major difference in the German state of mind between that war and the next: in World War Two, the Germans were aware of the possibility of defeat. And in 1945, that would have meant not merely the loss of some distant colonies; rather, the Germans were led by Hitler to believe that defeat would result in the annihilation of the German nation.

There have been many cases of genocide during the twentieth century. Not all are equally familiar to Americans. The U.S. government sponsored a museum devoted to the Jewish victims of Nazi genocide, but still speaks of "allegations" of the mass murder of Armenians by the Turks, now our NATO allies.[1] Our media blame Pol Pot for the transformation of once-peaceful Cambodia into a slaughterhouse in which 2 million people died out of 8 million; but they never hint that some of these deaths were attributable to our own client regimes, and to our massive aerial bombardment of defenseless Cambodian villages. Notwithstanding its sanctimonious war against Milosevic's Serbia, the United States has long since lost the moral high ground on this issue.

Typically, genocide has been blamed by the experts on either ideology or genes. We are innocent lambs, led astray by the persuasive powers of a few evil men like Hitler or Pol Pot; or else we are killer apes, expressing nothing but our true nature when we create horrors like Auschwitz or Tuol Sleng. Let me offer a third explanation, a psychohistorical one, which does

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